



**EVERYTHING YOU EVER
WANTED TO KNOW
ABOUT REGISTERING TO**

VOTE

**AND VOTING IN THE
UNITED STATES**

2004 | A GUIDE FOR YOUNG +
FIRST-TIME VOTERS

**declare
YOURSELF**

Yep, it's here again: It's a federal election year. We're about to elect a president and vice-president, members of Congress, governors, local officials, and more.

And if you're reading this guide, that means you're about to be a part of the process — as a first-time voter.

Now more than ever, young voters can play an important role in the election. But to do that, you need to register to vote. It's never too early to start thinking about registering to vote, thinking about which candidates and issues you care about, and talking to your friends, parents and family about how you feel. It's never too early to **DECLARE YOURSELF**.

Get started here...



Message from Maine's Secretary of State

As a first time voter, you'll be taking part in a fundamentally important aspect of our democracy. You should be congratulated for recognizing the importance of voting, and for taking the time to learn more about the process. This booklet provides a great deal of valuable information about registering to vote and casting your ballot.

Our state has a long-standing tradition of outstanding civic involvement and voter turnout. In fact, Maine has been among the top two states in voter participation during the past three Presidential elections-leading the nation in 1992 and 1996. Because of your interest and the efforts you'll make to encourage other young people to get involved, I'm confident that Maine will continue to be a leader in this regard.

If you have questions or comments about the voting process, please feel free to contact Maine's Elections Division at (207) 624-7650 or CEC.Elections@maine.gov. Online information is also available at www.maine.gov/sos/.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dan A. Gwadosky".

Dan A. Gwadosky
Secretary of State

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WHY SHOULD I READ THIS GUIDE?

Congratulations! You're turning 18! (Or, you've already turned 18. You get the picture). At 18, you have the right to vote. You – and millions of others your age – can now be a fully participating member of the democratic experiment known as the United States of America.

Experiment? That's right. When the Founding Fathers of this country wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1776, which led to the creation of the United States of America as a democracy, it was a gamble – a big risk. If the experiment of independence and democracy were to succeed, then it would mean that the country would be governed by officials elected by the people. The experiment of democracy would mean that individual people would have an equal say in how the country would be run and who would be running it. If the experiment failed, well...let's just not even think about it.

Luckily, things turned out pretty well for the Founding Fathers. The American system of government began to take more shape in the Articles of Confederation, and eleven years after the Declaration of Independence was drafted and adopted, the right to vote was spelled out by the United States Constitution.

And today, more than 200 years later, the experiment of democracy continues. As long as you're 18 and an American citizen, you have an equal chance to decide who you want to run the country, your state, your city and your town. If that's not compelling, consider the fact that if you encouraged ten people to vote, and those ten people each encouraged ten other people to vote, and so on and so on, the votes would add up pretty quickly.

We, the Declare Yourself team, think it's so important that every person understands how much each vote matters that we've created this voter education guide. In this guide, you will find lots of important information you will need to register to vote in any state, you will learn about which forms you need to request an absentee ballot (if you're going to college out of the state, out of the city, or anywhere away from home, this will be helpful for you). Most important, you will learn how to stay on top of campaign issues, and what to expect on the big day – Election Day (November 2, 2004).

As long as you're 18 and an American citizen, you have an equal chance to decide who you want to run the country, your state, your city and your town.

A LITTLE BIT OF VOTING HISTORY

Although the **right to vote was established over 200 years ago**, the battle to extend that right to all Americans would take place over many years. For many years, the only people who could vote were white men who owned property. It's important not to take this right for granted – not only because it's a foundation of democracy and freedom in this country, but because so many people have struggled throughout history to ensure that all people would have an equal voice. And we should never forget that, even today, people from all over the world continue to come to this country because of the freedoms and liberties that are so central to our everyday lives.

Here are a few important milestones in the history of voting in America:

1870

THE 15TH AMENDMENT Elimination of Racial Barriers

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

With the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, African Americans were "officially" granted the ability to vote at the end of the Civil War. But due to discrimination and certain rules, they were not actually able to vote until the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which resulted in widespread reform of voting procedures.

1920

THE 19TH AMENDMENT Elimination of Sexual Barriers

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

Women were not allowed to vote until 1920. Groups of "suffragettes" – women who fought for the right of women to vote – petitioned, organized, demonstrated and wrote essays to win passage of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

1971

THE 26TH AMENDMENT 18-Year Old Vote

"The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age."

Believe it or not, the voting age in America was not always 18 years old. Before the passage of the 26th Amendment in 1971, citizens had to be at least 21 years old to be able to cast a vote.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE YOUTH VOTE?



Even after all that struggle, voter turnout in the United States is on the decline. Why does that matter? It's simple math: A democracy functions most effectively when all of its voices are represented. If only older people voted, for example, it's a pretty safe bet that issues that face young people (you!) might not be at the top of the agenda. And besides, you are entitled to the right to vote just by virtue of being a citizen of the United States, so why wouldn't you do it?

Unfortunately, the trend in voter turnout among the youngest voters, in particular, has been in a pretty steady downfall over the past 30 years. Consider this: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 50 percent of the 18-24 year-old age group eligible to vote in the 1972 Presidential Election actually turned out to vote. Nearly 30 years later, only 32 percent of eligible young people voted in the 2000 Presidential Election. That means that over half of eligible 18-24 year-olds did not vote in 2000.

Why is voter turnout declining among 18-24 year-olds? Some people say that they don't have enough time and don't know enough about the candidates or issues. And some people say that they don't know how to register to vote or don't know where to go to vote – and some people also say they don't know how to request an absentee ballot even if they are registered but are going to be away from home at the time of an election (such as a college student attending college in a state, city, or address other than home). For some young people, a feeling of being disconnected from government, or that “politicians don't listen to me” is the reason they say they don't vote. But elected officials must be responsive to their constituents, so your vote is actually your way of telling leaders what you care about.

There may be many reasons people give for not taking advantage of the right to vote, but it's never too late to actually jump into the game, rather than sitting it out on the sidelines. There are too many issues that affect young people – such as education, jobs, health care, crime and violence – to sit it out on Election Day. And even if you're not 18 yet, you can do your part by making sure others around you are registered, getting educated about issues and candidates, and planning to vote.

Here's the bottom line: If you don't vote, someone else is deciding your future for you. It's that simple. If you have an opinion about the cost of college tuition, jobs, the economy, or tons of other laws and issues that affect you, then you're already involved. Now take advantage of your right to determine your future. What are you waiting for?

For some young people, a feeling of being disconnected from government, or that “politicians don't listen to me” is the reason they say they don't vote. But elected officials must be responsive to their constituents, so your vote is actually your way of telling leaders what you care about.

WHAT ARE THE BASIC STEPS INVOLVED IN VOTING?

There are a few steps every voter must take before showing up at the polls on Election Day. These steps include not just filling out a registration form (and possibly an absentee ballot request form), but learning how to become an informed, educated voter. Here are the basics:

STEP 1 Register to vote.

STEP 2 Voting absentee? You must request an absentee ballot from your local election official – pursuant to the laws and deadlines of your state – and return it before Election Day. The deadlines for requesting absentee ballots and returning absentee ballots vary from state to state, so check the **ABSENTEE BALLOT CHART** on pages 12-15 for your state's information.

STEP 3 Educate yourself about candidates and issues you care about.

STEP 4 Save your polling place information (you'll receive this information in the mail after you register to vote).

STEP 5 Double-check your voting location and mark your calendar for Election Day. Now go VOTE!

See the next pages to find out the details of EACH step for your state...

WHO CAN VOTE?

According to the Federal Election Commission, you must:

- Be a citizen of the United States
- Be a resident of the state in which you're planning to register
- Be at least 18 years old at the time of the next election (most states require a person to be 18 at least 30 days before the next election, so make sure you check on your state's Secretary of State Web site listed on the **VOTER REGISTRATION CHART** on pages 8-9 of this guide)

In addition, most states have the following two requirements (but not all states, so be sure to check out your state's Web site on the **VOTER REGISTRATION CHART** on pages 8-9). You must:

- Not be imprisoned or on parole for the conviction of a felony
- Not currently be judged mentally incompetent by a court of law



HOW DO I REGISTER TO VOTE? AND WHEN?

Before you can even think about voting, you have to register to vote (except in North Dakota). And not only do you have to register, but you have to make sure you do it within a certain amount of time before the election. Each state has a different deadline for voter registration (check your state on the [VOTER REGISTRATION CHART](#) on pages 8-9), but in many states, you need to register at least 30 days before Election Day, which is always the Tuesday after the first Monday in November in a federal election year (the elections in which we elect a president and vice-president). This year, Election Day is November 2, 2004.

There are a few very important things to think about as you prepare to register to vote:

1) MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE RULES FOR YOUR STATE:

For most states, you can either register to vote **BY MAIL** (printing your form off the Internet or picking one up in person from the DMV, state election office, or other location; completing and signing it; and then mailing it in) or **IN PERSON**. A few states have slightly different “rules” about voter registration, so you must learn the requirements for your state before you get started. There are a few very important things to remember as you decide how you will register:

- **There are six states with SAME-DAY REGISTRATION**, which means that you can actually register to and vote at the same time (but only if you bring a photo ID with your address on it): Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Wyoming. And in North Dakota, you don't have to register at all in order to vote.
- **There are a few states in which your FIRST VOTE must be done IN PERSON**. These states are Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. So you should think about this before you register to vote.
- **In a few states, you cannot request an ABSENTEE BALLOT if you have registered to vote BY MAIL**. This means that you should plan to register to vote in person (at one of the places listed below) if you plan to vote absentee. These states include: Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.
- **A few states do not accept MAIL-IN voter registration forms**, which means that you must register in person at one of the places listed below. The states that don't accept mailed-in voter registration forms include: New Hampshire (will only accept a mailed-in form as a request for its own absentee voter registration form) and Wyoming. And Massachusetts will accept a mailed-in and completed registration form, but the form cannot be a photocopy or downloaded form – this means that you will have to pick up an original Massachusetts form in person (see page 7 for a list of places to pick up a form).

Each state has a different deadline for voter registration. Plan ahead and register early!

And here's a pretty good tip to keep in mind: If you register for the first time in a state by mail, you must present ID at some point prior to voting. Just keep that photo ID with you when you go to your polling place, because you just might need it.

2) IF YOUR STATE ACCEPTS MAIL-IN VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS, MAKE SURE YOU KNOW WHERE TO GET THE FORM FOR YOUR STATE FROM THE WEB:

You can register by downloading and printing a form for your state from the Web, but make sure to mail the completed registration form to the correct address for your state. At **www.DeclareYourself.com**, you can find state voter registration forms. These forms include the correct mailing information, so you will know where to mail your form.

Also, if you are registering to vote for the first time, you must include a photocopy of a government-issued ID with your photo and address on it (a driver's license or U.S. passport will work). (If you don't have a driver's license, you can call your local election official to find out what other forms of ID will work.) This photocopy must be mailed along with your completed and signed voter registration form to your state's election office (the address already on the form).

3) IF YOU CHOOSE TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN PERSON:

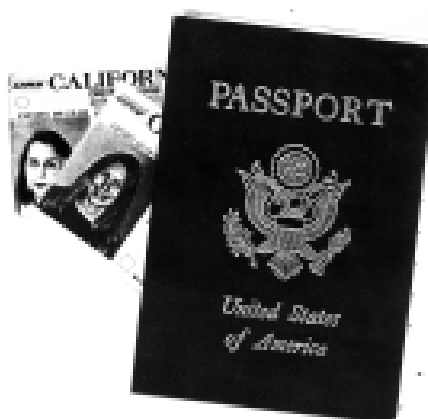
You can also register to vote in person at several places: your local board of elections office, post offices, military recruitment centers, the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), state offices that provide public assistance, state offices that provide state-funded programs for the disabled, and many public libraries.

4) WHEN AND WHY TO RE-REGISTER:

You must re-register (complete the whole form all over again), or provide a written note to your election official, every time you move or change addresses; make sure you register in the state in which you are a resident. You must also re-register or provide a written note to your election official if you change your name.

Generally speaking, if you registered to vote in the past, but you haven't actually voted in a few past elections (like four years or something), it's a good idea to either re-register or just call your local elections office or official to make sure your registration status is still active.

If you are registering to vote for the first time, you must include a photocopy of a government-issued ID with your photo and address on it (a driver's license or U.S. passport will work).



The background of the entire page is a light blue-grey color with a subtle, repeating pattern of five-pointed stars. A large, dark blue banner with a slight gradient is positioned diagonally across the upper half of the page. The text "VOTER REGISTRATION IN MAINE" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font on this banner.

VOTER REGISTRATION IN MAINE

VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE

In-person registration until and including Election Day.

ELECTION OFFICE PHONE NUMBER

207-624-7650

SECRETARY OF STATE & ELECTION OFFICE WEB ADDRESS

<http://www.maine.gov/sos/>

CAN I USE A MAIL-IN VOTER REGISTRATION FORM TO REGISTER?

Yes, until 10 business days before an election.

WHAT ABOUT **ABSENTEE** VOTING? WHEN WOULD I HAVE TO VOTE "ABSENTEE" (WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, ANYWAY?) AND HOW WOULD I DO IT?

If you are not going to be in your city and state of residence on Election Day, you will have to obtain an absentee ballot (sometimes known as an "early ballot" in some states) to vote. Generally speaking, your home address and state of residence is what appears on your driver's license.

THERE ARE TWO MAIN REASONS A PERSON MAY REQUEST AN ABSENTEE BALLOT:

- 1) You expect to be away from your home voting precinct on Election Day
- 2) You cannot appear at your local polling site because of:
 - School (college or university students temporarily living away from home)
 - Military Service
 - Travel abroad plans that will keep you away from home on Election Day
 - Religious reasons
 - Age (age 70 and older)
 - Illness
 - Handicap or physical disability
 - Jury Duty
 - Service as an election official/volunteer

Even if you are registered to vote, you have to request an absentee ballot if you plan to be away from home on Election Day. To request that an absentee ballot be sent to your current address (your "current address" is the address where you are physically planning to be on Election Day) you must request it by filling out an absentee ballot request application for your home state, or by sending a request letter (check your individual state's Secretary of State office or home local election official to be sure you know what to do for YOUR state).

Each state's absentee ballot request form is slightly different, but here's the basic information you will need to complete:

- 1) your name and residence address as stated on your registration form or registration card
- 2) the address to which the absentee ballot should be sent (if different than your registered address)
- 3) the name and date of the election in which you would like to vote absentee
- 4) the date and your signature

Again, each state's form and procedure is different, so some may request additional information (Check your state on the **ABSENTEE BALLOT CHART** on pages 12-15).

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN REQUEST AN ABSENTEE BALLOT:

- Contact your local county, city or town election official. This varies from state to state, but this individual may be called the following: County Clerk, County Auditor, Probate Judge, County Registrar or Supervisor of Elections, or the Board of Elections. In most cases, you can find the phone number for these offices listed in the "government pages" section of your phone book (this section is usually the one in the front of the phone book).
 - Download and print an absentee ballot request application for your state from the Web. You can either:
 - Check your state's election or Secretary of State Web site address (see **ABSENTEE BALLOT CHART** on pages 12-15 of this guide), find and download the appropriate forms for your state, and then SIGN and mail it in to the address on the form or the Web site.
- OR:
- Visit **www.DeclareYourself.com**, click on "absentee ballot," and then follow the directions to find and download the appropriate forms for your state, and then SIGN and mail it in to the address on the form or the Web site.

Make sure you register to vote FIRST!

If you are a member of the military serving overseas, or you're a U.S. citizen or military dependent living overseas, you can download and print a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) form for your specific state from the Federal Voting Assistance Program's Web site: <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag/vagchapter3.html>, and then sign and mail it in.

For all states, absentee ballot application information can also be found on www.DeclareYourself.com.

STATE-BY-STATE ABSENTEE BALLOT INFO (continued)

WHAT IS THE DEADLINE TO SEND IN MY COMPLETED ABSENTEE BALLOT?	WHERE SHOULD THE ABSENTEE BALLOT BE MAILED?
In person: No later than 5:00 p.m. on the day before the election; By mail: Postmarked no later than the day before the election.	Return ballot to absentee election manager (also the circuit clerk) in your county. Call local election office number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.sos.state.al.us/cfelectional/cfm?gtgoffice=Circuit%20Clerk
By mail: Must be signed by witness and mailed by Election Day. By fax: Must be signed by witness and faxed by 8:00 p.m. (Alaska time) on Election Day	Mail to your county election office. Call local election office number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.gov.state.ak.us/lge/votelections/abinfo.htm
Must be returned to the county recorder or other officer in charge of elections by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day	Mail to your county recorder's office. Call local election office number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.sos.state.az.us/election/2004/infocounty.htm
By mail: Received by office no later than 7:30 p.m. on Election Day; In person: No later than close of business (5:00 p.m.) the day before the election; By designated bearer: By 7:30 p.m. on Election Day; By authorized agent: By 7:30 p.m. on Election Day	Mail to the office of the county clerk. Call local election office number listed in phone book.
All ballots must be returned by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day	Mail to your county election office. Call local election office number listed in phone book or see list at: http://myvoteclerk.ca.gov/county/index.html
All ballots must be returned by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day	To be established by the county clerk; call your local election office number listed in the phone book or see list at: http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/countyclerk.html
All ballots must be returned by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day	Mail to your town clerk. Call your local election office number listed in the phone book or see list at: http://www.sots.state.ct.us/RegisterManual/TNOLK.htm
All ballots must be returned by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day	Ballots should be mailed to the county department of elections in which the person resides (home address, not temporary address). Call your local election office number listed in the phone book or see list at: http://www.state.de.us/election/index.htm
All ballots must be returned by 12:00 p.m. the day before the election in order to be counted for every office. (All ballots received after that time will be counted for federal offices only.)	Send to Board of Elections and Ethics Office: 441 4th Street, NW, Suite 250 N, Washington, DC 20001.
In-person voting: No later than 4:45 p.m. on the day (Monday) before Election Day; Hand-delivered ballot: No later than 8:00 p.m. on Election Day; By mail: Postmarked no later than Election Day.	Call your supervisor of election office number listed in the phone book or see list at: http://election.dos.state.fl.us/county/index.shtml
The ballot must reach the supervisor of elections no later than 7:00 p.m. on Election Day	Call your county board of registrar's office number listed in the phone book or see list at: http://www.sos.state.ga.us/elections/info/2000_voter_info.asp
Ballot must be returned on or before Election Day.	Return to your county clerk. Call number listed in the phone book or see list at: http://www.hawaii.gov/elections/voteab.html
Check with your local county clerk or visit: http://www.hawaii.gov/elections/voteab.html	Return to your county clerk. Call number listed in the phone book or see list at: http://www.idos.state.id.us/elect/clerk.htm
Absentee ballots must be received by the county clerk no later than 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election.	Return to your county clerk, or the board of election commissioners. Call number listed in the phone book or see list at: http://www.elections.state.il.us/votemto/pages/ElecAuthorityList.asp
Absentee ballots must arrive in election authority's office no later than Election Day	Return to your county election board. Call number listed in the phone book or see list at: http://www.in.gov/sos/elections/pdfs/county_contact.pdf
In person: Absentee ballot must be received no later than noon on the day before Election Day; By mail or by hand: Must be received by the county clerk's office before the polls close on Election Day. If voting by a traveling board, the absentee ballot must be received the day before Election Day.	The voted absentee ballot must be enclosed in the "affidavit envelope." The "affidavit envelope" must be signed, sealed, dated and inserted in the "Return Carrier Envelope" to the County Auditor who mailed your absentee ballot to you.
In person: No later than the close of polls on Election Day; By mail: Postmarked no later than the day before the election and returned by county auditor no later than noon on Monday following the election.	Check Iowa Secretary of State's office.
All ballots must be returned by the close of polls on Election Day.	Return to the county election officer. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of county officers at: http://www.kssos.org/elections/elections_registration_cso.asp
All ballots must be returned by the close of polls on Election Day.	Return to the county clerk's office. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of county officers at: http://www.ky.sos.com/Elect/GenElectInfofiles/countyclerk.asp
In person: Absentee voting takes place 12 days to 6 days prior to any scheduled election at your county's registrar of voters. By mail: All ballots must be returned by the day before election.	Return to the registrar of voters in your parish. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of registrars at: http://www.sos.louisiana.gov/elections/elect-absentee.htm
All ballots must be returned by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.	Return to your municipal office. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of municipal clerks at: http://www.state.me.us/sos/cec/elec/clerk.htm
All voted ballots mailed from WITHIN the United States must be received by the county board of elections on or before 4:00 p.m. on the Wednesday after the election. Voted ballots mailed from outside the U.S. must be received by the county board of elections.	Return ballot to the county board of elections. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of county boards at: http://www.elections.state.nd.us/citizens/county_boards.html
All voted absentee ballots mailed within the U.S. must be received by close of polls on Election Day; absentee ballots mailed from outside the U.S. must be postmarked on or before Election Day, and they must be received within ten days of the election.	Return ballot to the county clerk's office. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of county clerks at: http://www.state.na.us/sec/elec/clk/clerk.htm
In person: May vote at the township clerk's office until 4:00 p.m. on the day before election; By mail: All ballots must be returned by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day	Return ballot to the city or township clerk's office. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of city and township clerks, along with other voter information, at: http://www.sospublius.org/
All ballots must be returned no later than the close of polls on Election Day	Return ballot to the county auditor or county clerk. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of county clerks at: http://www.state.nm.us/elections/countyweb/linkcounty.html
All ballots must be received by the registrar no later than 5:00 p.m. on the day before the election (exceptions for military serving out-of-state in times of war); voted absentee ballots received for presidential-president will still be counted if they are received up until 7:00 p.m. on the day of the election for president.	Return ballot to the county voter registrar's office. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of county voter registrars at: http://www.sos.state.ms.us/elections/VoterRegistrars.asp

STATE-BY-STATE ABSENTEE BALLOT INFO (continued)

STATE	ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION FORM (OR INSTRUCTIONS)	HOW EARLY SHOULD I REQUEST AN ABSENTEE BALLOT?
Missouri	http://www.sos.mo.gov/forms/elections/absentee.pdf	In person. Request applications for absentee ballot as early as 70 days before the election. By mail: Check Web site.
Montana	http://sos.state.mt.us/css/ELBVote_Information.asp	Request an application for absentee ballot 75 days before election day until 12:00 noon the day before the election.
Nebraska	http://www.sos.state.ne.us/Elections/absentee.pdf	Request an application for absentee ballot 120 days before an election until 4:00 p.m. on the Wednesday before Election Day.
Nevada	http://sos.state.nv.us/nvelection/faq.htm#regs	Request applications for absentee ballot anytime before 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before the election.
New Hampshire	http://www.state.nh.us/sos/vote.htm#ABSENTEE	Request applications for absentee ballot 30 days before the election.
New Jersey	http://www.state.nj.us/ps/elections/absentee_doe.html	Check with your local county clerk or visit: http://www.state.nj.us/ps/elections/electionshome.html
New Mexico	http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Election03Special/ABInfo.htm	Applications for absentee ballots may be requested at any time until the Thursday before the election.
New York	http://www.elections.state.ny.us/votnrg/absentee.htm	Applications for absentee ballots must be mailed to your county board no later than 7 days before the election, or delivered in person no later than the day before the election.
North Carolina	http://www.app.sboe.state.nc.us/ (click on "voting information" to find absentee info)	By mail: Request ballot 50 days prior to, but not later than, the Tuesday before Election Day.
North Dakota	http://www.state.nd.us/sec/elect/vote/voting-absentee.html	Application for absentee ballots may be made at anytime throughout the year, but should be made early enough to allow sufficient time to mail out absentee ballots a few days before Election Day. Absentee ballots will not be issued on Election Day.
Ohio	http://seirform2.sos.state.oh.us/sos/voter/index.html	Application must be received by noon on the Saturday before the election. If voting in person, you may apply until the close of regular board of elections' hours the day before the election.
Oklahoma	http://www.elections.state.ok.us/absentee.html	Request for absentee ballot (must be in writing) must be made by 5:00 p.m. on the Wednesday preceding the election.
Oregon	http://www.sos.state.or.us/elections/other/info/vk.htm	Applications for absentee ballot are available 45 days before an election.
Pennsylvania	http://www.dos.state.pa.us/bcei/cwp/view.asp?a=109&q=431707	Applications for an absentee ballot must be received by the department county board of elections no earlier than 50 days before the election and no later than 7 days before the election. Emergency absentee ballot applications may be submitted to the county board of elections no later than the Friday before the election.
Rhode Island	http://www.elections.ri.gov/mailvote.htm	Application for absentee ballot must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. on the 21st day before the election.
South Carolina	http://www.state.sc.us/scsec/absent.htm	Voters may request absentee ballots anytime during the year, starting on January 1 of the election year. If voting in person, a voter may apply until 5:00 p.m. on the day before the election.
South Dakota	http://www.sd.sos.gov/absentee.htm	Absentee ballots can be requested anytime during the election's calendar year (starting January 1 of the election year) until 3:00 p.m. on Election Day. Citizens can request all absentee ballots for that calendar year in one absentee ballot request application.
Tennessee	http://www.state.tn.us/sos/election.htm	A voter may request an absentee ballot no earlier than 90 days and no later than 7 days before the election.
Texas	http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/pa/mphlets/earlyvote.shtml	Voters may apply for an absentee ballot (known as an "early ballot" in Texas) as early as the 60th day before the election until the 7th day before the election.
Utah	http://www.elections.utah.gov/absenteevoting.html	Voters must apply for an absentee ballot no later than the day before the election.
Vermont	http://vermont-elections.org/elections1/absenteevotinginfo.html	Absentee ballot request should be made as early as possible, but NO LATER than 5:00 p.m. or the close of the town clerk's office on the day before the election.
Virginia	http://www.sbe.state.va.us/VotRegServ/Forms/VoterRegistrationForms.htm	In person. Apply no less than 3 days before the election. By mail: No less than 5 days before the election.
Washington	http://www.secs.state.wa.gov/elections/register_absentee.aspx	You may apply as early as 90 days before the election up until the day before the election.
West Virginia	http://www.wv.sos.com/elections/voters/absentee.htm	You may apply as early as 12 weeks before the election and no later than the 6th day before the election. (Military/overseas voters may apply as early as January 1 of the election year.)
Wisconsin	http://elections.state.wi.us/sebpage33.html	Written request for absentee ballot by mail must be received by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the election.
Wyoming	http://soswv.state.wy.us/election/vote.htm	Absentee ballots may be requested beginning January 2004 up until the day before the election.

For all states, absentee ballot application information can also be found on www.DeclareYourself.com.

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WHERE SHOULD THE ABSENTEE BALLOT BE MAILED?

<p>Return ballot to the county clerk's office. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of county clerks at: http://www.sos.mo.gov/elections/countyclerks.asp</p> <p>Return ballot to your local election office. Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://sos.state.mt.us/asssets/elections/ealists.pdf</p> <p>Return ballot to your local election office. Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.nv.gov/home/SOS/Elections/clerks.htm</p> <p>Return ballot to your county clerk. Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://sos.state.nv.us/votection/county/co_clerks.htm</p> <p>Return ballot to your town clerk. Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.state.nh.us/sos/clerks.htm</p> <p>Return ballot to your county clerk. Call number listed in phone book or see: http://www.state.nj.us/ps/elections/elections/home.html</p> <p>Return ballot to your county clerk. Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.sos.state.nm.us/ELECTION/HTM</p> <p>Return ballot to your county board of elections. Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.elections.state.ny.us/contes/countynap.htm</p> <p>Return ballot to your county election office. Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.sos.state.pa.us/DOE/cwpview.asp?a=1099&q=431721</p> <p>Return ballot to the Rhode Island Board of Elections. 50 Branch Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island, 02904. See http://www.elections.nv.gov/Boards/boards.htm</p> <p>Return ballot to your county board. Call number listed in phone book or see list of county boards at: http://www.state.sc.us/secs/votereg.htm</p> <p>Return ballot to your county auditor. Call number listed in phone book or see list of county auditors at: http://www.sdsos.gov/AUDITORS.TXT</p> <p>Completed ballots must be received by mail by the local county election office which sent the ballot to the voter. Call number listed in phone book or see list of county offices at: http://www.state.tx.us/elections/voter/countys.html</p> <p>Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/countys.html</p> <p>Return ballot to your county election officer. Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://www.elections.utah.gov/countyclerks.html</p> <p>Return ballot to your Town Clerk's office up until the day of the election. On Election Day, you must return your ballot to your polling place. Call number listed in phone book or see list at: http://permot-elections.org/elections/2003TGauidOct.pdf</p> <p>An addressed return envelope is provided with your absentee ballot.</p> <p>Return ballot to the county election officer. Call number listed in phone book or see: http://www.sec.state.wa.gov/elections/auditors.aspx</p> <p>Return ballot to the county clerk's office. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of county clerks at: http://www.wssos.com/service-elrosters/countyclerks.htm</p> <p>Return ballot to your municipal clerk's office. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of municipal clerks at: http://elections.state.wi.us/municipalclerkslist.txt</p> <p>Return ballot to the county clerk's office. Call number listed in the phone book or see list of county clerks at: http://sswv.state.wy.us/election/clerks.htm</p>
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SO MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF ELECTIONS... HOW CAN I TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

Because our government has federal, state and local governments (city and town councils, school boards, and more), many elections take place at all levels. (But don't worry – you don't have to keep registering to vote every time another election pops up, unless you've changed addresses or names since the last time you registered!) Here's a quick look at a few different types of elections in which you'll be eligible to participate once you've registered to vote.

Federal elections are the elections in which you vote to elect a president and vice-president, as well as members of the U.S. Congress. These elections always take place on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, and they always take place during the even-numbered years (like 2002 and 2004). You probably already know that the elections for president and vice-president take place every four years, so this year's Election Day is November 2, 2004. But because terms for senators and congresspersons are different, "midterm" elections happen every two years for these officials. Every member of the U.S. House of Representatives comes up for re-election every two years, along with roughly one-third of the U.S. Senate (senators serve six-year terms).

As a result, you can – and should – be voting every two years in a federal election.

There are also elections at the **state, county, city or town** levels, and these don't necessarily take place every two years or every four years. Many of these elections take place during the odd-numbered years and at different times throughout the year. These can include elections for governor, state representatives, local council people, and others, including school boards in some cities, towns or counties.

In recent years, the Internet has become a great resource for information about issues, candidates, and more. A couple of good ideas:

- state election Web sites (type in your state name and "election office" or "Secretary of State" into a search engine)
- candidates' Web sites
- www.DeclareYourself.com includes information about political news and information
- local newspapers' Web sites



IN A FEDERAL ELECTION, WHAT WILL I BE VOTING ON?

Because this year is a federal election year, you'll be voting to elect a president and vice-president, all members of the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as one-third of the U.S. Senate. But there's usually more on the ballot. You may be voting for a governor of your state or for members of the state legislature. You'll also likely be voting on other issues that face your state, like a "ballot measure" (a proposed law). Or sometimes you'll be voting on a proposition, an amendment to your state's constitution, and other issues.

Usually, you will receive information in the mail to let you know in advance what issues you'll be voting on – some states send out a "sample ballot," which includes the various propositions and ballot measures. Most newspapers also print sample ballots before the election, as well. Once you have this information and the titles of various issue propositions and measures, you can search for more detailed information to help you make your decisions.

How can I get – and stay – informed about candidates and issues?

There are many places to look for information about candidates and issues at the federal, state and local levels. Your city or community's newspaper is always a good source for finding out about local and state issues, propositions, and candidates. Newspapers often include lengthy articles about the issues facing your state and community, so your local paper is a great way to stay on top of upcoming federal, state and local elections, as well as the candidates and issues on which you'll be voting. TV news is another source, including local and national news.

HOW WILL I FIND OUT WHERE TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY?

The location where you will vote on Election Day, also known as your “polling place,” is determined by your address. This is important to remember, because you may not vote in the same location as someone who lives a few streets or blocks away from you. After you’ve registered to vote, you will receive some kind of notification in the mail from the elections office. In some states, this notification will be a “voter ID card.” This notice will confirm that you are now a registered voter (congratulations!). The notice may also include information about where your polling place will be, so make sure you hold on to it.

* If you haven’t received anything in the mail three weeks or so after you’ve sent in your registration form, call your local elections office (again, check online to find this information, or just look for the number in the “government pages” section of your local telephone book).

In some states, you will receive a “sample ballot” as Election Day nears. This booklet or paper may include your specific polling place for your home address, so you should definitely save it.

CAN I FIND OUT WHERE MY POLLING PLACE IS BY LOOKING ONLINE?

Yes! There are a few places on the Internet where you can find out where your polling place will be. You can:

- Go to **www.DeclareYourself.com**, click on “polling place locator,” and follow the directions.
- Some local government elections offices include areas where you can look up your polling place based on your address.
- Many state election office or Secretary of State Web sites include polling place information by zip code (type your state name and “election office” or “Secretary of State” into a search engine).
- Check your local newspaper as Election Day nears; newspapers will often print information about polling places before the election.



.com



WHAT SHOULD I BRING WITH ME TO MY POLLING PLACE?

Every state is slightly different in its Election Day ID requirements. In all cases, you should bring a driver's license with you just to be on the safe side, even though not all states require proof of identification. (Again, if you don't have a driver's license, just contact your local election official listed in the phone book or online to check on other acceptable forms of ID.) And it's generally a good idea to bring some proof of your address. Some states require you to bring a "voter ID" with you. The advance notification you receive from your state's election office will let you know exactly what to bring with you on Election Day.

WHAT TIME DO POLLING SITES OPEN AND CLOSE?

In all states, polling places generally open between 6 and 9 a.m., and they close between 6 and 9 p.m. But each state varies slightly in its polling hours. Make sure you read your hometown newspaper during the days and weeks before the election; most local newspapers publish polling place hours. You can always check on your state's Secretary of State Web site for this information (see VOTER REGISTRATION CHART on pages 8-9 of this guide).



Congratulations! You're now ready to register and to start thinking about voting this year. Take the extra step and make sure you talk to your friends and family about "practicing democracy," and help them register to vote by sharing this guide or pointing them to www.DeclareYourself.com to download voter registration forms and get more information.

You will soon be the proud wearer of the "I Voted" sticker. Welcome to the club!

declare yourself

DECLARE YOURSELF IS A NATIONAL NONPARTISAN, NONPROFIT CAMPAIGN TO ENERGIZE AND EMPOWER A NEW MOVEMENT OF YOUNG VOTERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THIS ONE-YEAR YOUTH VOTER CAMPAIGN IS THE CULMINATION OF A THREE-YEAR PROJECT – THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ROAD TRIP. THE ROAD TRIP WAS A 50-CITY CROSS-COUNTRY TOUR OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND A MULTIMEDIA EXHIBIT ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF OUR NATION'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE. THE ROAD TRIP TOURED THE NATION FROM 2001 UNTIL 2003, AND THE DECLARE YOURSELF TOUR IS VISITING COLLEGE CAMPUSES AND MUSIC SHOWS THROUGHOUT 2004.

FOUNDED BY PRODUCER AND PHILANTHROPIST NORMAN LEAR, THE DOI ROAD TRIP AND DECLARE YOURSELF ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY THE HOME DEPOT, PRESENTING SPONSOR; AXA FINANCIAL, INC., PROUD SPONSOR; AND PARTNERS THAT INCLUDE CLEAR CHANNEL ENTERTAINMENT AND YAHOO!. THE CAMPAIGN INCLUDES A LIVE SPOKEN WORD AND MUSIC TOUR OF COLLEGE CAMPUSES; A COMPREHENSIVE VOTER REGISTRATION AND ELECTION INFORMATION WEB SITE; A YOUNG VOTER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES OF STATE; AND PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO DOWNLOAD VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS, VISIT WWW.DECLAREYOURSELF.COM.

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Research Sources

The National Archives and Records Administration
Project Vote Smart
Declare Yourself
The League of Women Voters
U.S. Census Bureau Report:
Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2000
National Association of Secretaries of State



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